

PRO/CON: Should we stop recycling our trash?

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Adonis Herring sorts cans and bottles at Capital Redemption Center on Sept. 22, 2015, in Albany, New York. The center offers refunds on empty beverage containers before they are transported to distributors and recycled. AP/Mike Groll

PRO: It costs too much money to recycle

You may want to save the planet. The best way to help is to make sure your garbage is buried in a giant garbage dump called a landfill. They have plenty of room for garbage.

People talk about “reduce, reuse, recycle.” What they mean is, first, do not use more than you need. Second, use things more than once. Finally, you should recycle. It sounds like a good idea.

There is a problem, though. Recycling costs too much money.

Paper And Plastic And Glass

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is part of the government. It is in charge of protecting the environment. The EPA says it makes sense to recycle only some garbage. In fact, it says only about one-third of all garbage should be recycled. Recycling any more costs too much, the EPA says.

Recycling paper is expensive. Paper is made out of trees. Paper companies pay for the trees they use. Then, new trees have to be planted. It costs money. Yet making new paper is still cheaper than recycling it.

Plastic is another problem. Plastic is made out of oil. The price of oil has gotten much cheaper. Now, it costs less money to make a new plastic container than recycle an old one.

Glass is even worse. The old glass has to be collected by truck. Recycling trucks cause pollution. Melting it down to make recycled glass causes pollution, too. Recycling glass is more expensive than making it from scratch. New glass is made mainly from sand and there is plenty of that.

Recycling has good parts and bad parts. Government officials should think about both. Then, they should end programs that waste money and hurt the environment.

Here is a test. Will anyone pay you to recycle? If it made money, companies would be offering you money for your trash. Do not believe what you are told about recycling. It is probably just a bunch of garbage.

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CON: Recycling is still the way to go

We Americans use a lot of stuff. We also throw out a lot. We dump far more trash than we need. The trash gets dumped into giant landfills. Americans make twice as much trash as people in Europe.

Since 1960, we have thrown out more and more garbage. Since that year, the amount has gone up three times. In 2013, we threw out more than 508 billion pounds. Each person threw out 4.4 pounds every day.

We have gotten a lot better at handling garbage. People began recycling more about 30 years ago. Now, we in America recycle about one-third of what we use.

We Can Do Better

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is a government department. It reports that we recycle many batteries, paper and cans. Yet we do not recycle as much of other things. We should recycle more cellphones and computers. We should also recycle more glass and plastic bottles and jars.

We should be able to do much better than this. So why are we not? Some people just do not want to do it or think it is hard. Some states say people have to recycle. They have laws about this, but people do not really follow the laws.

Some states and cities do much better. They take recycling seriously. One of those cities is Seattle, Washington. In Seattle, people pay to throw out garbage. The more garbage they throw out, the more they pay. It works. Half of Seattle recycles.

Some people see it differently. They argue that recycling costs too much money.

Should we recycle only if it is cheap enough? Doing that sends the wrong message.

Some experts say companies should not waste stuff when things are being made. When the companies make things, they should be careful not to use extra stuff. Then, they do not have to throw out as much.

An important change is starting. This change will cut down on garbage and pollution from when things are made until they are thrown away. It will also get people to change what they use and throw out. That is the way to go.

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